QUANTA

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Information on the Association

Membership of QUANTA, the independent QL user group, is by annual subscription. The Membership Secretary can supply full details. Copies of the association's constitution & annual accounts are available from the Secretary. There is an extensive software library. There are active national subgroups. Details are given in the Member's Guide and in this magazine.

QUANTA Committee - 2006/2007

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT / EDITORIAL   John Mason

Firstly due to a most unfortunate slip-up the April/May issue of QUANTA did not contain QLToday's intended advertisement but the old one from February/March. QUANTA regrets that this occurred and proffers their apologies to QL Today and all readers.

The Sussex Subgroup put on the Hove QUANTA Workshop at Portslade Town Hall on Sunday 28th May. Attendance was modest. John Hall came up from Glamorgan, and Roy Brereton from Clevedon but no members came from north of Potters Bar. It was pleasing to have 3 Traders present - Just Words, Q Branch, and T F Services.

Roger Godley demonstrated enhanced versions of the Psion 4 programs which take advantage of the extended colour range. These enhancements included an ability to have up to eight screens visible at once. It is to be hoped that these greatly enhanced facilities will be generally available soon.

Hugh Rooms gave a very interesting overview as to how Global Positioning Systems work and presented a GPS system he had built which uses a QL to process the data received from the satellites.

I am hoping to be able to include further details on both these topics shortly.

A big thank you to the Sussex Subgroup, Roy Wood's ladies and their families for the splendid range of snacks they provided.

[*See overleaf for photos of Hugh's and Roger's exhibits. Ed*]

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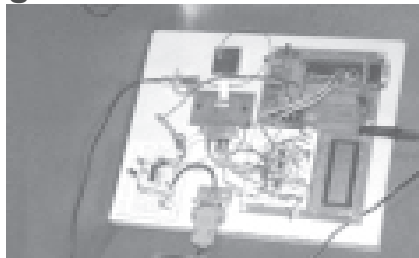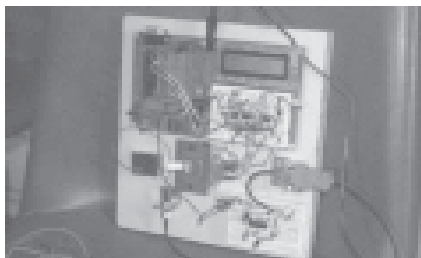
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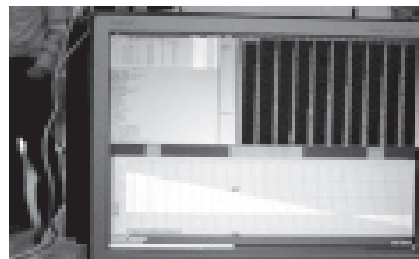All Contributions are Welcome.
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Hugh Rooms' GPS Circuit Board

Roger Godley's Enhanced Psion 4 Screens

LIBRARY CORNER   John Gregory

John Gregory reports that the author of the Proprint programs has made a new version available. Members wanting a copy should ask for library disc PF06. Until Roy has actually taken over as Librarian John will happily handle any request for that disc or anything else that is wanted.

QUANTA COMMITTEE PRECIS   Sarah Gilpin

Since the AGM there has been very little to report as there have been no actual committee meetings. There has been one email meeting with reference to the Quanta Web site. A report has been written by John Gilpin regarding the change of Web server due to the discontinuation of service provision by our former supplier . *[See Page 29 Ed.]*. The new provider, Continum Ltd, has sent us a contract document, which has been circulated to all committee members for approval. A unanimous decision has been reached to accept the conditions in the contract and to notify Continum Ltd of our acceptance.

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RECURSIVE SQUARES
CORRECTION
Stephen Poole

O n reading the last QUANTA Magazine, I realised that Listings 1 & 2, although different, produced the same output! This is obviously my fault, as I rewrote listing 1, but by inadvertence must have saved it under the Listing 2 name...indeed, a quick look at a previous version of Listing 2 revealed the program I should really have sent in...So, here with my apologies is the other listing.

```
100 REMark Squares_2_bas. by S. Poole, v27sept2005
110 CLEAR: OPEN#1,con_16: WINDOW 512,256,0,0: INK 4
120 PAPER 0: SCALE 256,-100,-80: PENDOWN: BORDER 1,7
130 :
140 FOR xit=1 TO 7
150    CLS: LINE 0,0: square 0,64,0: i$=INKEY$(#1,250)
160 END FOR xit: WINDOW 256,206,0,0: i$=INKEY$(#1,-1)
170 :
180 DEFine PROCedure square(ang,mo,ct)
190 LOCal mv,kt: mv=mo/2: kt=ct+1
200 IF ct=xit: RETurn
210 TURNTO ang+0  : MOVE mo: square ang-90 ,mv,kt
220 TURNTO ang+90 : MOVE mo: square ang+0  ,mv,kt
230 TURNTO ang+180: MOVE mo: square ang+90 ,mv,kt
240 TURNTO ang+270: MOVE mo: square ang+180,mv,kt
250 END DEFine
260 ::
```

CYCLIC ORBITS (Part two).
Stephen Poole

I n QUANTA Volume 20 Issue 3 of April 2003, page 9 I listed a 51-line program to draw Epicycles using trigonometry. This would draw curves of orders 1 to 6, and although I mentioned fractional orders, I did not include them in the listing.

So now, to set things right, I have rewritten the routine from scratch, cut it down to fit on one EDIT page, and replaced the Trigonometry by a one-line procedure definition, (line 270), which you can therefore easily experiment with, and maybe even explore some new domains.

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To generate user-friendly fractions, the code contains a 'num'-erator and 'den'-ominator FOR-loop, (each of which can then conveniently be used in a division), to form a Decimal number which the QL is capable of handling. Then two more FOR loops, 'f' and 'j', are used, each of which represents a bearing, and these are the angles for the turtle directions. Separate distances, MOVEs 'm1' to 'm4', are used to make the final 'DOT'-ted curves occupy inner and outer positions. If you wish to see the guts of the routine operating, change PENUP on line 120 to PENDOWN and OVER 0 to OVER -1.

Notice how the excellent QL LOGO achieves neat curves with but just six code statements. This is so much easier to master than trigonometry, which requires such elusive notions as 'negative radii'!
Here's hoping you like the results: My favourite is 5/3, but I won't break the suspense by telling you which mathematical curiosity it outputs! I have learnt quite a few new things about curves with this little program...

```
100 ::
110 REMark Cycles_bas, by S. Poole, v13jun2005
120  CLEAR: OPEN#1,con_16: WINDOW 512,256,0,0: PENUP
130   PAPER 0: INK 4: SCALE 100,-75,-50: CLS: OVER 0
140    m1=10: m2=20: m3=m1+m2: m4=m1-m2
150 :
160 FOR num=2 TO 6
170    FOR den=3 TO 5
180       nd=num/den: IF nd=1: GO TO 230
190       AT 1,1: PRINT num;'/';den
200       FOR f=nd TO 360*den STEP nd
210          FOR j=0 TO nd: t=f+j: tn=t*nd: DOT t,m3: DOT -t,m4
220       END FOR f: i$=INKEY$(#1,200): CLS
230    END FOR den
240 END FOR num: WINDOW 512,206,0,0: STOP
250 :
260 DEFine PROCedure DOT(tt,mm)
270 LINE 0,0: TURNTO tt: MOVE mm: TURN tn: MOVE m2: POINT_R
0,0
280 END DEFine
290 ::
End of Listing.
```

We have been using the QL successfully for over 10 years as the primary tool for Genealogy or Family History. To build the family tree we used Chris Boutel's G3 programme and have put our database into Archive. We also approached the Family History Centre in Chorley, and they were kind enough to provide us with HD discs for all references to the name we were researching. Two things should be noted here, one - this was before the days of easy access to the same information on the web, and two - it provided us with over 20,000 names.

For anyone who is thinking of starting their family history there are a number of decisions to be made before starting or choosing a computer media to work with. This is something we could not do when we started as we had no Personal Computer.

The first decision is to define the scope of the work you wish to undertake. Are you looking to generate a family tree from yourself back 3 or 4 generations or are you looking at one branch of the family only? Do you just want to generate the tree or do you wish to have some information about your forebears, their occupations and the places they lived? Are you interested in the families they married into, do you wish to record whole families or just the line that you are descended from? All these questions will affect the programme you use and the information you generate and the form you store it in. Also an important point to consider is what you intend to do with the information researched and whether anyone else in the family is doing similar research?

In our case John had no interest in tracing his family as initial research had shown that the records available in Jersey, Channel Islands, had no family references before his great grandparents. My father's family have such records and these are being researched and recorded by other members of his family and there is no point in duplicating work. Two cousins and myself decided that we would research the families of our maternal grandparents (but we were not to record any 'skeleton's in the cupboard' according to my mother. Did she know of some?).

Once the 'scope' has been decided where do you start? Start with your relatives and plenty of paper. Write down all the information you think you know on your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles etc. Next

speak to as many of these people as are still living and confirm dates, places, occupations and any information they have of their parents and grandparents. With luck this will provide you with information for 3 or 4 generations. Where there were large families you may find that the younger members are a bit hazy on facts about their elder brothers and sisters and visa versa. Where large families were spread out over 20 years or so the older ones may well have left home and started work at about 14 years old. If the family moved any distance then the place of origin can become confusing, depending on who gave you the information. In the 19th and early 20th centuries those who had died were not talked about, this not only applied to children who died young but also to parents who died while a child was young. All this may seem very basic, but without this preliminary information and your scope an informed decision regarding the computer and programme best suited to your needs is impossible.

The second major decision is to decide on your 'ideal' format. How do you want to keep your information? – a data base, a genealogy programme with notes, a tree with linked potted histories etc. Do you want the family tree to be interactive with the potted histories or referenced with a unique number for every name recorded? What do you expect to happen to your research in the future?

Frequently the children of a family historian have no interest in the information found, or, as happened in my mother's family, the person doing the research was a bachelor who spent over 50 years working on the family history and no-one has any idea of what happened to his work when he died. Often when a house is cleared out, letters, diaries and other historic memorabilia is just thrown away without anyone looking at them and then they are lost forever. We have found out since that he privately published a history of the family name and short biographies of people of interest.

We intend to make all our information available to the One Name Society. We have contacted them already to find if they currently have a contact for this name.

The third major decision is what sources to use and how to record them. This is important if you intend to make your research available to others. It is also important to know whether the information comes from someone's memory or has been confirmed and verified from other sources. Many libraries now have a section for Local History and these frequently hold copies of the Civil Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages since 1837. The Scottish civil registers may only be viewed in

Scotland. Libraries may also hold printed copies of Parish registers, although to find some of the earlier ones you may have to go to local Record Offices or Cathedral Archive centres.

Census records can provide a wide range of information, and once more your local library may have a number of the census' available for your area and the 1881 census for the whole country. The biggest draw-back is that many of these records are handwritten and in the case of the earlier census' the enumerator has made marks to indicate what informa-tion he has recorded and this can make reading the information hard.

Once all this preparation has been done the time has come to look at computer programmes to help record the information. This I will be discussing in the next Issue.

SCREENS AND PIC FILES   Dilwyn Jones

Now that more and more users are GD2-capable and most of us using pointer environment, we are increasingly using the QL for graphics.

The two main QL graphics formats are simple uncompressed screen images and the pointer environment area save files, better known as PIC files because they are usually saved with filenames ending in _pic (short for picture).

There is also a third called a Partial Save Area or _PSA file, which is basically a PIC with a few more bytes of information.

1. SCREEN FILES

These are straightforward copies of the screen as held in memory. An original Sinclair QL had a fixed display size of 32 kilobytes for a 512 x 256 pixel screen and life was simple.

Then Minerva came along and we had to contend with two possible screen areas in memory, although not many people used the second screen.

Then along came SMSQ/E and systems like QXL capable of supporting mode 4 and mode 8 screens in various sizes. Then when "colour drivers" came along, life became even more complicated and the files got larger.

Fortunately, high resolution and high colour screens are generally only supported on SMSQ/E systems, so on QDOS systems you can usually assume it's a 32K screen at a fixed address in memory and save that screen with a command like SBYTES filename,131072,32768 which basically saves the screen as 32768 bytes starting from address 131072.

SBASIC includes extensions to find where the screen starts in memory, the length of each line and the screen dimensions, or you can use the equivalents in the "Display Code" articles previously published in QL Today.

The SBASIC extensions are:

SCR_BASE - a function which returns the base address of the screen in memory.

SCR_LLEN - a function which returns the line length from the start of one line of graphics to the next. Note, though, that on the Aurora, this is a fixed value. The Aurora uses fixed length lines, and only actually uses as much of each line as needed to hold the screen resolution actually in use.

SCR_XLIM - a function which returns the pixel width of the screen.

SCR_YLIM - a function which returns the pixel height of the screen.

Using these functions we can work out a formula to calculate the length of the screen and save using SBYTES as follows:

SBYTES filename,SCR_BASE,SCR_LLEN*SCR_YLIM

This command works on QPC2, QXL and most systems, but the fact that the Aurora uses fixed line increments irrespective of resolution means it won't work in all resolutions with the Aurora screen.

The number of pixels per byte or bytes per pixel across the screen depends on the colour depth involved. The DISP_TYPE function will return the mode number for you, and with a knowledge of the structure of memory in each mode, we can work out how many bytes on each line to save, even on the Aurora:

Mode 4 (also known as mode 0): 2 bytes for every 8 pixels across. Line length = pixel_width DIV 4 (assuming each line is a multiple of 8 bytes

across with no rounding off needed).

Mode 8: 2 bytes for every 4 pixels across: 2 bytes for every 4 pixels across. Line length = pixel_width DIV 2 (e.g. 256 pixel wide screen is 128 bytes wide)

Mode 16, 256 colours: each pixel is represented by one byte in memory. So a 512 pixel wide screen is also 512 bytes wide.

Mode 32 (QPC and QXL) and Mode 33 (Q40/Q60) both need 2 bytes per pixel, although the screen data is laid out differently in mode 32 and mode 33.

So using this information we can work out how many bytes in each line represent the screen lines, and use SCR_LLEN to jump from the start of one line to the next, skipping any extra unused space on each Aurora video line. Here is a crude listing to show you the approach to take towards constructing a routine able to handle saving of screens on all systems. I'm sure this routine is not perfect, but it will provide a starting point for you to experiment in saving handling graphics. In particular, this routine only handles existing colour modes. If, say, 24 bit or 16 colour screen support is added to SMSQ/E in future, or if you wish to handle say MODE 12 on a Thor, you'll have to add suitable lines for those systems yourself.

```
REMark save a copy of the screen to 'filename'
IF VER$ = 'HBA' THEN
  REMark SMSQ/E and SBASIC systems
  wide = SCR_XLIM
  mode_number = DISP_TYPE
  SELect on mode_number
   =0,4   : llen = wide DIV 4 : REMark MODE 0
   =8     : llen = wide DIV 2 : REMark MODE 8
   =16    : llen = wide      : REMark MODE 16 (8-bit 256 colours)
   =32,33 : llen = 2*wide    : REMark MODE 32 or 33 (16-bit colour)
  END SELect
  addr = SCR_BASE
  OPEN_NEW #3,filename
  FOR y = 1 TO SCR_YLIM
    PRINT #3,PEEK$(addr,llen)
    addr = addr + SCR_LLEN : REMark start of next line
  END FOR y
  CLOSE #3
ELSE
```

```
 REMark QDOS - assume QL-style 32K screen
 SBYTES filename,base,32768
END IF
```

2. PIC FILES

The difference between screen and PIC files is that the latter have 10 extra bytes at the start, consisting of a pair of identifying byte values, a set of three word values holding the screen width, screen height and line width of each line in the file (as opposed to the computer's line width), and a byte holding the screen mode number and finally a byte which is spare and currently unused except by the old graphics program QDesign which I think uses it to flag up a compressed file in its own proprietary format.

Word value : $4AFC (decimal byte values 74 followed by 252)
Word value : width of the graphics file in pixels
Word value : height of the graphics file in pixels
Word value : width of each line of graphics in bytes
Byte value : screen mode number of this graphics file
Byte value : spare, unused according to documentation, usually a value of 0

There is a third format called PSA or Partial Save Area file. This is almost exactly the same as a PIC file, but has four extra bytes before the identifier flag $4AFC (often values of 0 but may be used by user programs to store an extra 4 bytes of information for whatever purpose). PSA files are rarer than PIC or screen files, but George Gwilt is one programmer, for example, who makes extensive use of PSA files, so be aware of their existence.

The format of the graphics data itself is exactly the same as for a screen file, meaning it's possible to easily convert between screens and PIC files simply by adding or removing this 10 byte preamble. Here's a couple of listings to show how easy this is. The first is called Scr2Pic_bas and converts screens to PIC files:

```
100 REMark convert screen to PIC
110 CLS : CLS #0
120 INPUT 'Filename of input screen    > ';ip$
130 INPUT 'Filename of output PIC file > ';op$
140 INPUT 'Screen width (pixels)  > ';pixw%
150 INPUT 'Screen height (pixels) > ';pixh%
160 INPUT 'Bytes per line in image> ';bpl
170 INPUT 'Screen mode number     > ';sm%
```

```
180 :
190 REMark check details and if exists or not
200 fer = FTEST(ip$) : REMark does file exist?
210 IF fer < 0 THEN REPORT #0,fer : STOP
220 fl = FLEN($)
230 IF fl < 0 THEN REPORT #0,fl : STOP
240 base = ALCHP(fl+10)
250 IF base < 0 THEN REPORT #0,base : STOP
260 :
270 REMark load into memory to convert
280 LBYTES ip$,base+10 : REMark allow room to add PIC header
290 :
300 REMark add PIC file header
310 POKE_W base,HEX('4AFC') : REMark identifier
320 POKE_W base+2,pixw% : REMark width
330 POKE_W base+4,pixh% : REMark height
340 POKE_W base+6,bpl : REMark bytes per line
350 POKE base+8,sm% : REMark screen mode
360 POKE base+9,0 : REMark spare unused byte
370 :
380 REMark save image as PIC file
390 PRINT
ving'!op$!'...'
400 SBYTES op$,base,fl+10
410 :
420 RECHP base : REMark free up heap memory used
```

To change the above program to convert screen to PSA files, just make the following amendments:

```
240 base = ALCHP(fl+14)
400 SBYTES op$,base,fl+14
```

and add 4 to the address values in lines 310 to 360.

The second program is called Pic2Scr_bas and predictably converts a PIC file to a simple screen file.

```
100 REMark convert PIC to screen
110 CLS : CLS #0
120 INPUT 'Filename of input PIC file > ';ip$
130 INPUT 'Filename of output screen  > ';op$
140 :
```

```
150 REMark check details and if exists or not
160 fer = FTEST(ip$) : REMark does file exist?
170 IF fer < 0 THEN REPORT #0,fer : STOP
180 fl = FLEN($)
190 IF fl < 0 THEN REPORT #0,fl : STOP
200 base = ALCHP(fl)
210 IF base < 0 THEN REPORT #0,base : STOP
220 :
230 REMark load into memory to convert
240 LBYTES ip$,base
250 :
260 REMark save image as screen file
270 REMark basically, the PIC minus the 10 byte header
280 PRINT
ving'!op$!'...'
290 SBYTES op$,base+10,fl-10
300 :
310 RECHP base : REMark free up heap memory used
```

   To amend the above program to convert PSA files to screen files, change line 290 to:

```
290 SBYTES op$,base+14,fl-14
```

   You may have noticed that while PIC files include information about screen dimensions and mode number to make it easier for programs to know what they are loading and to help ensure that screens are not loaded in the wrong screen mode (e.g. a screen saved in mode 32 on a QXL will not display correctly in mode 33 on a Q60), simple screens do not, making them harder to handle.

   In order to work out dimensions and details of screen files, all you can do is to check the file size and make an educated guess as to what "standard" widths and height screens fit into that file size. Here are some examples:

	Mode 4	Mode 16	Mode 32	Mode 33
512 x 256	32768	131072	262144	262144
640 x 480	76800	307200	614400	614400
800 x 600	120000	480000	1280000	1280000
1024 x 512	131072	524288	1048576	1048576
1024 x 768	196608	786432	1572864	1572864

   This is hardly a perfect method - if you have a screen file of length

131072 bytes, for example, it is impossible to identify from the file alone whether it is a mode 16 (256 colour) 512 x 256 screen (e.g. from an Aurora) or a 1024 x 512 pixel mode 4 screen. In practice, if you are using an Aurora it is likely to be the mode 16 screen if you are using mode 16, whereas if you are a Q40 or Q60 user, you are unlikely to have mode 16 so it must be the latter!

Now that we have GD2 or high colour systems, one use we can make of screen files is wallpaper. The designer of the GD2 system has thoughtfully included a BGIMAGE command to load screen files as wall-paper (note: current versions of BGIMAGE only display screen files correctly, not PIC or PSA files). These pictures remain in the background on your computer screen, providing a colourful backdrop to your comput-ing environment. The only snag is that BGIMAGE does not really make much check on the screen dimensions, so you must make sure you use correct sizes of screens for your current display mode. Load a 640 x 480 screen on a machine currently displaying 800 x 600, for example, and you will get an unholy mess of a picture. Equally, load a picture into a different screen colour depth than that from which it was saved and you will also get a very messy display. If this happens, you will need to use a BGCOLOUR_QL 0 or BGCOLOUR_24 0 to reset the screen background to black and try again.

When saving screen graphics, I tend to include some form of clue in the filename as to what size or colour depth the picture might be, e.g. if I called the screen picture32_800_scr it usually means it's a mode 32 screen, 800 pixels wide, which I saved in SVGA 800 x 600 resolution. There is no hard and fast rule about this, it's just a matter of devising a fairly simple method you'll remember for your own use.

Now that more and more people have GD2 systems and more people are writing programs to make use of the colours available to us, I've started putting together a CD-ROM of wallpaper-style screens. This CD, called simply QL Wallpaper, will be available direct from me for just 5 pounds and will be freeware, so you can copy it as you see fit. It will include versions of each picture in a small set of standard resolutions (QL 512 x 256 screen size, VGA 640 x 480, SVGA 800 x 600, XGA 1024 x 768 and Q40/Q60 1024 x 512) for you to use on your system. If space permits, I'll also put some of these images onto my web site for download.

Dilwyn Jones, Email:dilwyn.jones@tesco.net

Acknowledgement is made to ql-users list and to its contributors for the following News items.

QemuLator

At the end of March 2006, Daniele Terdina wrote to ql-users list:

QemuLator version 2.3.4 for Windows has been released and can be downloaded at

http://users.infoconex.com/~daniele/winql.html.

The basic version is now available for FREE. It emulates the features of an unexpanded QL (but can also access QL floppy disks and the Windows file system) and its speed is limited to be roughly equivalent to that of a real QL. Registration is still required to access all of the extra emulator features and for much faster emulation speed.

QemuFast (a prototype of a version of QemuLator that runs four times faster) is also available again, for registered users only.

The following evening, Dilwyn Jones in his usual "immediately – if not before!" way responded to ql-users list with the following:

I downloaded and installed this version. What you get is basically a 128K QL with QemuLator's known levels of compatibility and ability to use any QDOS or Minerva ROM, and the possibility of using non-standard 48K ROMs and 16K ROM images like Toolkit 2. The earlier trial version only gave you 30%of the speed of an unexpanded 68008 QL, but I think it gave you the option of a small memory expansion. This trial version does not allow ram disks, parallel port, TCP/IP access, level 2 file system or QXL.WIN file access, or expanded memory, so it is well worth stumping up for the expanded version, but this free trial version does run at the same speed as an original QL with 128K of memory and supports up to 8 drives (which can be floppy drives or PC hard disk directories) and you can use your preferred ROM version (it comes with a version of Minerva). This unregistered 128K version is quite OK for testing software on the emulator, or for running 128K software like games or SuperBASIC programs.

If you opt to register for the expanded version, you get the missing features and more. Examples of what you'll get with the expanded registered version:

- More RAM available
- TCP/IP access (use Jonathan Hudson's Lynx, QL-FTP and email programs)
- Level 2 filing system (i.e. directories)
- Read and (new to this version) write to QXL.WIN, like QPC2 or QXL.
- Ram disks
- Parallel printer port access
- Much faster than the unregistered version (depends to some extent on the speed of your PC).
- Ability to run Gold Card SMSQ/E

And a little bonus: once registered you have access to QemuFast, a much faster version, although not quite as compatible with some QL software as the standard QemuLator (bearing in mind that a registered QemuLator is already much faster than most people assume).

I guess QemuLator has lived in the shadow of QPC2 to some extent over the years, which is a pity. I can see that QPC2 is good for those like me who write programs to use the latest facilities, whereas QemuLator might be a good choice for those who just want to write the occasional SuperBASIC program and run their existing QL software without being too bothered about high colour and such things (e.g. people who return to the QL after a period of absence).

I'm glad Daniele is still updating QemuLator and hope his work will earn him some registration fees.

QStripper:

On 13th June 2006, Norman Dunbar wrote to ql-users list:

Greetings Earthlings,

Right then, as promised, QStripper has been put up on the Web for a severe testing session. I've done my bit and found a couple of bugs (details later) but nothing too 'heavy'. It's your turn now!

Until I have access to my Linux system with QT4 (it's running QT3

at the moment) I've not got a setup running on Linux yet, however, watch this space.

The place to go is here:

http://www.bountiful.demon.co.uk/qstripper.html

Basically, load your quill doc file either by:

... File | Open
... Drag and Drop
... Command line option
... Dropping the quill docs onto the application icon

and it will be opened and displayed in a format nearly reproducing that of Quill - i.e., bold, superscript, subscript and underline. You can then edit the look and feel until it is how you want it. Finally, you can export the file in one of these formats:

... text
... HTML
... DocBook XML
... PDF
Have fun.

Within the hour, *[Does nobody work on Tuesdays? Ed.]* Dilwyn Jones was on the case and replied to ql-users list:

Thanks Norman,
I would have downloaded it just now, but noticed that including Windoze support files it's a 3MB download first time, so those like me on download (dial-up) - wait until cheap phone rates!

Late evening and Francois Van Emelen joined the discussion saying:

Thank you for QStripper. I have already fed it with half a dozen of QL Quill docs and it does what it is supposed to do and it is fast and easy to use. I noticed only one weakness: it is not very good with special characters (éçàâä....) ... and most of my Quill docs are in French and Dutch :(

It would be nice to have a QStripper that would do the same job

for Quill docs in PC format.

I'm sure QStripper will be success!

[At this point I decided that not knowing what QStripper was, I'd ask Norman to send me a few notes to educate those like me. The following afternoon I received the following from Norman: Ed.]

As a part time programmer - but full time Oracle DBA - I often have to write new code. Recently I've been learning the QT4 toolkit for building cross platform applications using C++. In theory, code written to run on Windows can be ported to Linux (or other Unixes) with nothing much more than a recompilation. As my business runs on Linux, with a little Windows thrown in, I decided to try this out.

Whenever I have the need to learn a new development system, I choose my old favourite program WinStripper which was a small utility to load a Quill doc file and either print it or write it out as a plain text file. This time I decided to go further.

I have developed QStripper (currently for Windows only but watch this space, Linux users!) to read in quill files and write out any of the following:

... Plain text - as before;

... HTML files - this works, but is quite wordy at the moment. I'm using the internal 'to HTML' functions and they produce far too much code for my liking.

... DocBook XML files - Something I use quite often when writing Open Source documentation for the Firebird database project. My application produces 'article' files - an article is as defined in the DocBook specifica-tion. These files can be further processed by a number of utilities (mentioned on the web site) to produce all sorts of different outputs form the one input XML file.

... PDF files. The application uses an internal QT4 print command to produce a PDF file.

To get hold of the application you need to go to the web site address (see below) and download one set of support files and one application zip file. The support files are libraries and/or dlls that are

needed by the application (it isn't statically linked) and these need to be downloaded once only. They provide the compiler system startup code and the QT4 widgets and internal code. The application itself is about 75 Kb and once you have downloaded the support files, you only need to download the application each time I fix problems or produce a new version.

Installing is simplicity itself.

... Create a new folder, c:\QStripper for example.

... Download and save the two zip files into this folder.

... Extract the support routines.

... Extract the application.

... That's all.

You can, if you like, copy the QStripper.exe file and paste a shortcut onto your desktop.

Running QStripper is easy too:

... Drag and drop one or more Quill files from Windows Explorer onto the QStripper.exe file (in the above folder) or onto the shortcut on your desktop. The application will open all the dropped files provided that they are valid Quill docs.

... Run the application and use FILE | OPEN to select the files to open.

... Drag more files from Explorer onto a running program.

... Set QStripper up in your SEND TO menu, and use that ...

... There may even be more :o)

Only valid Quill docs will be opened. The program shows the text as per the original Quill doc with a header at the top, a footer at the bottom and the content in between. The contents are formatted to match the original document - bold, underline etc. Once loaded, you may make changes, add Italic text for example, and when satisfied with the result, export the modified text to one of the many export formats. You may also

print out the file to any of your attached printers.

There are of course a few bugs in this version, but for a first release, it's not all that bad (modesty was never a strong point of mine!). The known bugs are:

... There are problems with 'foreign' language characters. This is because the QDOS character set doesn't quite match up to the ASCII one. This is being worked on at the moment. (Well, it's on the TODO list). English documents are basically ok.

... XML output ignores character formatting at the moment. No bold etc in other words.

... HTML output is far too verbose. Needs a lot of tidying up.

... Certain documents can give an 'out of sequence' error. This is because Quill allows something like the following:

    bold on ... underline on ... bold off ... underline off

        The underline attribute is not fully nested within its containing bold parent. This throws off the HTML that is used internally to display the file contents with formatting. The program's loadfile code checks for out of sequence and flags up a warning. The output is only affected if exporting to HTML or XML as these do not allow improperly nested attributes. I have a fix however, that's on the TODO list as well.

That's about it really.

        As I'm using the Open Source version of QT4, I am required to provide my source code to anyone who wants it. At present, you have to email me if you really want it (Norman at Dunbar-it dot co dot uk) but once I get a proper release done, I'll be posting it on the web site as well. There's no point getting the code just yet as it is somewhat 'fluid' at the moment.

The web site where you can download QStripper is http://www.bountiful.demon.co.uk/qstripper.html.

        Needless to say that among all the other early messages of acclaim was one from Dilwyn Jones who wrote:

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Hey, nice one Norman!

Just downloaded and installed and it worked first time!

It's brilliantly simple to use and does a bit more than I expected. So here goes for what I hope will be the first mini-review!

You can open multiple Quill DOC files (which can have extension DOC or .DOC) in individual resizable windows. The document is formatted to fit the window. Bold, Underline, Sub and Superscript are shown (although on my 1024 x 768 screen the sub and super are a bit small to read).

You can add to the formatting - just highlight the word or text you want to change and click on Bold, Underline, Subscript or Superscript (available from menus or via icons) as well as italics which are not available in Quill of course. You can cut and paste.

It identifies Quill DOC files and must check the file preamble because it doesn't get confused between Word and Quill .DOC files. It doesn't load plain text files.

You can export the text to HTML, Docbook Xml, text, or PDF. A 4K DOC file was output as a 20K PDF, 5K HTML, 3K plain text and 4K Docbook XML. Not played enough with it yet to see how sizes of PDFs vary as DOC file size increases. I'm used to Windoze programs adding file extensions automatically, QStripper doesn't. Load MY.DOC, enter a name of MY when exporting a PDF and you get a file called MY, not MY.PDF, which would have made life a bit easier in Windoze I guess. I'll just have to remember to enter the extension!

Tools menu seems not to be implemented yet - wonder what that will do!

The program always defaults to QStripper's own directory, even after loading something from another directory.

The web site has brief instructions, but you may not need them. Just remember to put the system support DLL files into the same directory as QStripper and away you go - it can then be run like any other Windoze program, except of course it's a QL-specific program in terms of what it does, opening up Quill to the big wide world of PDF and HTML!

For a first release, top marks. The only downside (as is so often the case with Windoze programs) is having to download about 3MB of dll files to run a program which is only about 7OK in length! 3MB takes ages on dial-up, but as Norman says, you only have to download the system support files (dll's for Windows) once, from then on whenever the author updates the program, you only have to download the 70K or so of program itself, making it more like a QL program in terms of download size!

Norman says that in time there'll be a Linux version too.

If you are at all interested in what's going on in the software world for the QL, why not download this program and see for yourself what it's all about. You might even try jotting a few notes down in the form of a review for our next issue. All contributions to editor@quanta.org.uk please or by post to John Gilpin – address inside the front cover.

[*My apologies to all those who contributed to these newsworthy discussions on ql-users list but who have not been mentioned here. You too could write a review of these and other new software products and send them in for publication. Ed.*]

SUBGROUP MEETINGS

THE BIRMINGHAM BRANCH QL & 68000 User Group

This long-running group has moved back to its previous venue, the Queens Head pub in the City Centre. Meetings remain open to Quanta members and non-members alike. The Queens Head is in Steelhouse Lane, Central Birmingham, four minutes walk from Snow Hill main-line railway station and has ample street parking nearby.

Meetings are usually on the first and third Monday of each month (but not on Bank holidays unless the previous one was cancelled for that reason). After your first meeting you're expected to pay £1 each time towards the organisation and monthly newsletter costs - except once a year when the group pays all those who attend a pound instead (We provide food twice a year for those who attend the AGM and the group's birthday party) and at meetings we discuss all sorts of things, QL-related and otherwise, usually from about 8:20pm onwards till 10:30 or later. The group owns QL hardware, a disk library and subscribes to relevant magazines. People can join the mailing list for £3.50 per year, even if they can't attend regularly.

The contact number remains Mike Bedford White's, on 0121 708 2560, anytime after 11 am.

QUANTA DORSET SUBGROUP

Meetings are held, on the second Sunday of each month at the Merley Community Centre in Harrier Drive, Merley, just south of Wimborne Minster. Time: 2.00pm to 5.00pm. All are welcome.

John Meadows Tel: 01202 576189, or John Mason, 01425 275894.

EAST ANGLIAN QL USER GROUP

Meetings happen on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month at Bramerton Village Hall. Bramerton is just south of Norwich. They start at 1pm and end at 5pm. There is free parking on site, and tea/coffee is also provided free. If you can, please bring your QL system, all welcome.

Tarquin Mills <speccyverse@ntlworld.com> or Tel:01603-470399

LONDON QL AND QUANTA GROUP

Meetings are held in the School Room, which is the basement of the Borough Welsh Congregational Chapel, 90, Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1. This is almost opposite the junction with Marshalsea Road, at the other end of which, 5 minutes walk away, is the Borough Underground Station. Free parking is easily available in Southwark Bridge Road for road users, Cyclists are welcome.

Members currently each pay a subscription of £30 per year towards the cost of the hire of the hall and a small additional charge is made for tea/coffee - biscuits are then provided free.

Please bring your QL equipment if possible, all types welcome, e.g., PC portable running emulators. The Group has some systems stored at the venue for its use. In addition, there are lots of donated second user equipment, books, magazines, etc, available for purchase.

Time : 2.00pm to 6.00pm, on the second Sunday of the month.

No meetings are held in either December - winter break, or August - summer break. Giving 10 meetings a year.

Malcolm Cadman : Tel: 020 8691 5780; email: QL@mcad.demon.co.uk

NEMQLUG - THE NORTH EAST MANCHESTER QL USER GROUP

Meetings are held at 181, Urmston Lane, Stretford, Manchester. M32 9EH (Near Junction 7 of M60 Motorway - Was Junction 7 M63 Motorway). Our informal meetings start at 7 p.m. and finish at 11p.m. All welcome.

Meets on the last Thursday of each month (except December).

John/Sarah Gilpin 0161-865 2872 (gilpins@ic24.net)
or   John/Alison Southern 01625-850067. (tarragon@bigfoot.com)

SCOTTISH QL USERS GROUP

SQLUG meets at George Gwilt's home every second Sunday in the month. Please contact George Gwilt before coming to get the location.

Geogwilt@aol.com

SOLENT SUBGROUP

Meets at Botley Market Hall, all welcome. Park at the back and use side entrance.

1st Saturday of the month from 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm.

Graham Evans, Tel: 023 8040 3350.

SURREY QUANTA SUBGROUP (SQSG)

Venue is St Giles Church Hall, Ashtead. (This is the other side, towards the downs, of the main Epsom - Leatherhead road, up Park Lane which is at the Epsom end of the town).

From 8.00 to 10.30 pm on the last Wednesday of each month, except December.

Ken Bain 01932 347 432 (to midnight), kenb@bcs.org.uk

SUSSEX QL USER GROUP

Currently without a meeting place, anyone interested should contact Keith Mitchell or Roy Wood.

Roy Wood, 01273 386030 or Keith Mitchell, 01903 742263.

QUANTA WEB SITE   John Gilpin

For those of you who are not remembering who said what and when, I point you to the Chairman's Report for 2005/6 (Volume 23 Issue 1 Page 13).One of the aims for 2005/6 was "To Revitalise the QUANTA Web site."

The Chairman went on to say:

"The New QUANTA Web Site, however, has not been able to proceed as hoped primarily due to the lack of response to the request for a member to take on the job of Ecomms/Webmaster. Can anybody help, please? In the event of there being no response Committee will need to consider employing a contractor to move this forward and he will need to be paid."

At the end of April 2006, we heard that Ghoulnet – our current Web Services provider were upgrading their servers from the old (Sun) Cobalt servers which had reached their "End of Line". Ghoulnet published these three UPDATES on their web site:

There is no fixed time to phase out the existing service and servers. The situation is as follows.
The (Sun) Cobalt servers are no longer manufactured and are now EOL (End of Line). In the very near future they will not be releasing security updates or bug fixes for these servers. Although we can source security patches or compile them ourselves this is not really a long term solution.

We are asking people to move across to the new servers at their earliest convenience. Once everyone has moved across we will then power down the servers. We obviously cannot keep these servers going indefinitely so at some point we will stop accepting renewals for the old service. We do not want to disrupt client's services but keeping these servers up and running will become a serious security risk not only to the

servers themselves but to our whole network.

In the ideal situation we would like to be powering down these servers within 3 months. However realistically we know some clients will put the move off as long as they can so this will not necessarily be the final deadline.

[UPDATE 1]

As of 31/12/2005 we will no longer be accepting renewals on the old service. The new service has been up and running now for a year and it is now time to say good bye to the old Ghoulnet service which has been in operation now for 7 years. If all clients would please commence their migration plans as soon as possible we would be extremely grateful.

[UPDATE 2]

Some clients still don't seem to be aware of the new service. We are therefore going to allow renewals **BUT** this is on the understanding that you will migrate to the new service within 3 months. You won't lose any money in the migration process.

[UPDATE 3]

The service will be finally closing on the 31/05/2006. The servers are becoming increasingly hard to maintain and there are only around 200 clients on these now. After this date we will no longer be actively maintaining these servers and will not provide any support for them. The hosting renewals system is now closed for hosting on Ghoulnet.com.

Faced with this information and unable to update the QUANTA .org.uk as we had been doing since Bruce Nichols found it no longer viable to do so, we started to look around for alternatives to the advanced and more expensive services offered by Ghoulnet.

After considerable enquiries we came up with an offer which we felt we could not turn down. Continum Ltd., (www.continum.co.uk) – a member of the Continum Group offered us completely free access to their on-line servers to host the QUANTA org.uk web site including all registration fees etc as and when they are due in exchange for displaying their logo (hyperlinked to their web site) on our home page (and elsewhere

where it seems relevant and to make the comment "Supported by Continum Ltd.")

We explained to Continum the situation in which we had found ourselves (no access to update our site and emails no longer being redirected properly etc.) and despite it being a weekend when we spoke, our old site had been transferred to the Continum Servers and the email addresses brought up to date within 24 Hours!!

We are aware that there seems to be no difference between the old site and the new one since all that has happened is that the old HTML code and associated files has merely been transferred across. However, this now means that Committee can look once again at the question of QUANTA Web Site, its design and services offered. This is a very exciting time for QUANTA and anyone who has any ideas to offer, skills to provide or who merely wants to get involved should contact QUANTA Chairman, John Mason, in the first instance. chairman@quanta.org.uk will find him or his postal address and telephone number are inside the front cover of this magazine.

QUANTA SALES   John Gilpin

In collecting second-user goods from QLers, I have amassed a great deal of items which QUANTA hope to pass on to current QLers at a reasonable cost. I have now had time to isolate and sort out all the QL Microdrives, keeping those which are obviously "originals" containing software from many authors most of whom are no longer on the QL scene. The remaining microdrives in my collection contained all sorts of data and personal files from the original user and these have been cleaned both physically and electronically and reformatted, with new blank labels ready for reuse. I have also collected many Microdrive storage boxes from the Plastic Sinclair Wallet containing 4 blank cartridges to the Transform Plastic boxes which house 25 cartridges. Hence:

FOR SALE:

☐ "Transform" Plastic Box containing 25 reformatted
£1.00 each + £1.25ea. P & Pkg
second-user QL Microdrives (minimum format 205 sectors)

☐ "Sinclair" Plastic Wallet containing 4 reformatted

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£0.25 each + £0.40ea P & Pkg or 6 Wallets for £1.00+p & p
Second-user QL Microdrives (minimum format 205 sectors)
Note: Quanta accept no responsibility for the life expectancy of these Microdrives nor can they be held responsible for the loss of data and/or software as a result of the failure of these cartridges or any resulting financial losses incurred by the user.

All enquiries to: John Gilpin QUANTA Treasurer.

SMALL Ads
Q60 computer with 128 Mb RAM, 20 Gb HD, CD & FD drives, 2 PAR, 4 SER, mouse and keyboard.
SMSQ, Linux and software package installed.
Cost £669; Best Offer secures, but buyer who can collect from London preferred.
Email: david_mccann@tiscali.co.uk, Phone 0208-994 8103

MORE PICTURES FROM HOVE   Roy Brereton

Roy Wood (QBranch) Show Organiser & the Refreshments Corner

Bruce Nicholls   Tony Firshman
Pictures Courtesy of Roy Brereton.

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